

## Health Benefits of Basil

Basil (scientific name: *Ocimum basilicum*) is an herb commonly used in both Italian and Southeast Asian cooking, such as Thai and Vietnamese food. It comes in many varieties with different flavors, colors and leaf shapes, so the sky's the limit for how you prepare and consume it.



Common types of basil include:

- **Sweet basil:** If you've tried basil before, chances are it was sweet basil – the most popular variety. Sweet basil has basil's trademark round, curved, grass-green leaves and is a great base for pesto.
- **Genovese basil:** Genovese basil is sweet basil's Italian cousin. Also great in pesto and other Italian dishes, it has larger, darker green leaves and a stronger flavor.
- **Thai sweet basil:** Thai sweet basil leaves are flatter and pointier than sweet basil leaves. But the differences don't stop there. Its leaves have a distinct black licorice flavor that holds up well in high cooking temperatures, unlike sweet basil.
- **Purple basil:** This variety of basil has striking reddish-purple leaves. And its flavor is just as bold – it tastes like herby cloves.
- **Holy basil (tulsi):** Like its name suggests, people use it for worship in Hinduism. In [Ayurvedic medicine](#) (an ancient medical system from India), practitioners also consider it to be one of the most important medicinal herbs. It's more bitter than other basil varieties when eaten raw.

To grow basil, all you need is a pot, soil and lots of sunlight. And to remember to water it (but not too much!).

## Basil Benefits

- Blood sugar health.
- Heart and vascular (blood vessel) health.
- [Immunity](#)
- Thinking and reasoning ability (neurocognition).
- Protects against cell damage
- Prevents cancer
- Helps manage blood pressure and cholesterol
- Improves blood sugar levels
- Boosts mental health



Source: Cleveland Clinic